VA HANDBOOK 5005/9 Transmittal Sheet April 20, 2005

STAFFING

- **1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procedures regarding Title 5 outside-the-register examining, Title 38 hybrid employment, Recruitment Bulletin, and Veterans Recruitment Appointments (VRAs).
- **2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory VA procedures on staffing and recruitment. The pages in this issuance replace the corresponding page numbers in part I of VA Handbook 5005. This revision reflects: changes in Title 38 occupations; the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) elimination from Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations of part 333 on outside-the-register temporary examining authority; the retitling of Veterans Readjustment Appointment to Veterans Recruitment Appointment; and the discontinuance of VA's Recruitment Bulletin. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the Office of Human Resources Management and Labor Relations Web site.
- **3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management and Labor Relations.
- **4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.

5. RESCISSIONS: None.

CERTIFIED BY:

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY

OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

/s/Robert N. McFarland Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology /s/R. Allen Pittman Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration

ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION ONLY

(14) Encouraging follow-up contacts when recruiting for VHA mission critical positions by using promotional items of nominal value, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 5b(1)(h) of this chapter, and MP-4, part V, chapter 3, paragraph 3A.13.1a.

4. RECRUITMENT SOURCES

- a. **General.** Recruitment sources are varied and numerous. The extent to which the sources will be utilized will depend on local recruiting needs and resources. The sources described below, plus any developed locally, may be used singularly or in combination as circumstances indicate.
- b. **Standard Sources.** When labor market conditions are favorable, the following recruitment sources will normally produce a sufficient number of highly qualified candidates.

(1) Vacancy Databases

- (a) Under 5 CFR 330.707, facilities must post on OPM's USAJOBS vacancy database all VA title 5 competitive service vacancies for positions which last over 120 days and for which applicants outside VA will be accepted, unless the position is filled by an ICTAP eligible. The USAJOBS posting requirement does not apply to appointments under title 5 excepted service authorities (e.g., 5 CFR, parts 213 and 307), but does cover positions of 121 days and up filled under 5 CFR, part 316 time-limited hiring authorities, even if based on excepted appointment eligibility such as VRA under 5 CFR, part 307. Facilities have the option of posting other vacancies on USAJOBS such as those in the excepted service of title 5 or any in the title 38 excepted service.
- (b) VHA's Health Care Staff Development and Retention Office (HCSDRO/10A2D) operates the VA Vacancy Database in an <u>internet version</u> available to applicants for title 38 positions. The VA intranet version provides VA employees access to vacancies in both title 5 and title 38 which facilities have posted. Facilities may post vacancies on the VA Vacancy Database after obtaining a password and instructions from the HCSDRO by calling 504-589-5267.
- (2) **Civil Service Certificates of Eligibles.** Before, after or concurrently with consideration of candidates identified through inservice placement activities, the primary recruitment sources for filling competitive service positions are certificates of eligibles obtained from a VA or other Federal delegated examining unit or an OPM [s]ervice[s office]. (Ref: 5 U.S.C. 1104 and VA-OPM Interagency Agreement # VA-1 on delegated examining)

[]

- [(3)] **Reemployment Priority List.** Former VA employees on the facility's reemployment priority list will be given consideration as required by 5 CFR 330.201 330.209 and 5 CFR 351.803 and part IV of this handbook.
- [(4)] **Surplus and Displaced Employees.** Surplus and Displaced employees of VA and other Federal agencies will be given employment consideration as required by 5 CFR, part 330 and part IV of this handbook.

- [(5)] **Applicant Supply System.** An applicant supply system may also be used to maintain applications from persons having eligibility for excepted or noncompetitive appointment. Any applicable vacancy announcement requirements must be met.
- c. **Other Sources.** When the above recruitment sources fail to supply a sufficient number of well-qualified candidates, other sources such as the following should be explored. Candidates identified through outside recruiting sources, such as the following, must be considered for Federal employment in accordance with applicable VA and civil service regulations, requirements and procedures, including veterans preference.
- (1) Colleges and Universities. Through its close ties with medical and other schools, VA is associated on a day-to-day basis with these potentially productive recruitment sources. From a recruitment standpoint, professional contacts by line and staff officials with their academic counterparts are invaluable and should be cultivated and maintained. Such contacts, however, do not assure that these recruitment sources are being fully utilized. Therefore, VA field facilities will conduct a long range, general VA employment information program at local colleges and universities. Positive recruitment efforts are necessary to fully capitalize on these sources. HRM Officers should assume a leadership role in coordinating these efforts. Central Office staff officials who develop similar programs for specific positions pertinent to their functions will attempt to maintain the same alignment of local schools and field facilities. General instructions to field facilities concerning such separate programs will be coordinated with the Deputy Assistant Secretary for HRM[&LR] prior to issuance. Similarly, VA field facility officials participating in local, State, or regional college recruitment programs will, if feasible, do so in affiliation with the local schools.
- (2) **Other Educational Institutions.** Appropriate efforts should be conducted at educational institutions below the bachelor's degree level. Junior colleges, trade and technical schools, and high schools may prove to be productive sources of candidates for specific local recruitment needs. To some extent, the value of these efforts must be judged in terms of long-range objectives attained through career orientation and motivation of students.
- (3) VA Employees. One of the most productive recruitment sources for a field facility is its own employees. To capitalize on this source, responsible officials need to keep employees informed about VA recruitment needs. This may be accomplished by the use of e-mail and other electronic communication systems such as the internet and/or VA intranet (e.g., the VA Vacancy Database referred to in paragraph 4b(1)(b) of this chapter; conspicuous posting of local and VA-wide employment opportunities on employee bulletin boards; publicity in facility newsletters; and staff meeting announcements). For positions which are included in exclusively recognized units, facility management may consider seeking the assistance of the labor organization which holds exclusive recognition for that unit in the facility's recruiting effort. Employee assistance in recruitment can be encouraged by granting appropriate incentive awards, including cash awards, to those employees whose efforts result in the appointment of a candidate to a hard-to-fill position. (See VA Handbook 5017, Employee Recognition and Awards.)

(13) Organizations Representing Minorities or Applicants With Disabling Conditions

- (a) **Minority Applicants.** A program to recruit minority applicants should include ongoing relationships with historically black colleges and universities, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, alumni associations, and other organizations involved in the placement of minority applicants[(HACU)].
- (b) **Applicants With Disabling Conditions.** Efforts to recruit applicants with disabling conditions should include contacts with the local Equal Employment Opportunity specialists; rehabilitation agencies connected with State, county, municipal or private health care facilities; local, State or national offices of professional, veterans or other associations furthering employment opportunities for people with disabilities; and colleges, universities and other schools with candidates for employment in occupations found in VA.
- (14) **Veterans Organizations and U.S. Military Services.** In addition to other sources listed, to reach the work-ready veteran population, including disabled veterans, information about vacancies may be communicated to Veterans Benefit[s] Administration vocational rehabilitation counselors, VA Vet Centers and veterans organizations. When feasible, recruitment contacts may also be made with military separation centers.
- (15) VA Placement Service. [VHA's] Health Care Staff Development and Retention Office (HCSDRO/10A2D), 1555 Poydras Street, Suite 1971, New Orleans, LA 70112, maintains placement and referral services for [Title 38 full excepted service occupations and Title 38 hybrid occupations]. Those filing application forms with the VA Placement Service are referred, based on their geographic preference and specialty, to medical centers requesting lists of candidates. Applicants may obtain registration materials or additional information by calling the HCSDRO toll-free on 1-800-949-0002. VA facilities may request Placement Service referrals for a vacancy via the same toll-free number.
- (16) VA Central Office Program Officials. When health care facilities have been unsuccessful in recruiting for vacancies, they may request informal advice and assistance from the appropriate Service Director or other appropriate program officials on VA Central Office staff. Contacts should reference all pertinent information on the assignment involved. For physicians, the contact should identify the specialty, required qualifications, and intended assignment.
- (17) **Supplemental Sources.** Potentially productive sources also include the public interest programs for such individuals as enrollees of Federally funded economic opportunity programs, people with disabilities, rehabilitated public offenders, and others.
- (18) **VA Central Office Assistance.** The [Office of Human Resources Management and Labor Relations] (05[7]) and the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity (06) are available to assist in the development of recruitment programs.

<u>3</u>. A file for each advertisement will be established and maintained for 2 years. The file will include such pertinent information as a copy of the advertisement, media used, cost, and a concise assessment of the results achieved. This information will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of advertisements and to plan any needed improvements in future advertising efforts. Upon request, this information will be forwarded through channels to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for HRM[&LR] for review and analysis.

[]

- [(b)] **Recruitment of Minorities and Women.** Recruitment activities will be designed to reach and attract job candidates from all segments of society. Where appropriate, these activities should be tailored to improve their effectiveness among members of special groups. The following techniques may be helpful in this respect:
- <u>1</u>. Participation in recruitment activities and outreach contacts of program coordinators for employment of Hispanics, women, disabled veterans and other people with disabilities, and students/graduates of the [HACU] and of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or other EEO representatives;
 - 2. Spanish translation of job announcements, fact sheets, pamphlets, and other recruitment literature;
- <u>3</u>. Use of the Spanish language to reach the Hispanic public via the various media (radio, television, newspapers, and magazines);
- <u>4</u>. Pictures of Hispanic and other minority employees and women in recruitment literature and exhibits; and
- <u>5</u>. Identification of specific positions in which the employment of bilingual, bicultural persons would enhance VA's responsiveness to the unique needs of a large segment of the population which it serves.
- [(c)] **Recruitment Literature.** Recruitment literature developed by VA Central Office or by OPM is usually designed to support recruitment efforts on a VA-wide basis. This literature may be supplemented by additional material identified or developed by field facilities.
- [(d)] **Recruitment Exhibits.** Several professionally prepared recruitment exhibits are available from Central Office for use by field facilities on special occasions. Requests for these exhibits should be made through channels to the Director, Office of Administration or for some [health care] occupation portable exhibits, to the Under Secretary for Health, HCSDRO (10A2D). These exhibits may be supplemented by ones developed locally.
- [(e)] **VA Fact Sheets.** These are descriptive summaries of VA field facilities, their mission and special programs, and the community and surrounding areas, which are used to inform and interest prospective applicants in employment. Photographs are used to show facility features and activities, as well as historical and recreational items of interest. Fact Sheets are developed by the field facility with the advice and assistance of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for HRM [and Labor Relations.

- [(f)] **Open House Activities.** An effective means of publicizing VA recruitment needs is through local open house activities. Such activities are usually held in conjunction with Veterans Day, National Hospital Week, or similar observances; and they present excellent opportunities to publicize local, as well as VA-wide employment possibilities. Presentation of exhibits, distribution of recruitment literature, showing of film and similar recruitment messages can often be used effectively during activities of this type.
- [(g)] **Promotional Items of Nominal Value in Recruiting for VHA Positions.** Under 38 U.S.C. 7423(f), VA organizations and facilities may expend appropriated funds to purchase items of nominal value for use in recruiting individuals for employment in positions filled under 38 U.S.C. chapter 74 in VHA. Promotional item use will be limited to recruitment for occupation(s) considered mission critical based on the need to interest qualified applicants given current and anticipated job market conditions. (The companion Finance policy is in MP-4, pt. V, chap. 3, paragraph 3A.13.1a, dated June 18, 1993.)
- 1. An item whose total cost (including any taxes and related fees) amounts to no more than \$5.00 per individual recipient is considered to be of nominal value. Note that suitable items are usually available for a small fraction of the \$5.00 maximum. Purchase requests for such items will document the justification for the expenditure level in keeping with the criticality of the recruitment need.
- <u>2</u>. The item's purpose of serving as a recruitment aid must be evident on the item itself. To serve as a recruitment aid, the item will include a permanent display of:
- <u>a</u>. The Department's logo and/or the name of either the Department of Veterans Affairs or the VHA facility purchasing the item.
- \underline{b} . A telephone number and/or address (e-mail, mailing, and/or [W]eb site) to provide potential applicants with a VA point of contact for recruitment follow-up.
 - c. Space permitting, a recruitment slogan or message.
- $\underline{3}$. The entire item's design is to be professional and tasteful, and to reflect favorably on VA as a preferred employer.
- (2) **Recruitment on an Individual Basis.** The approach to be used in recruiting for a specific position should be tailored to fit local needs and circumstances existing at the time. There are some fundamental principles, however, that apply across-the-board in all recruitment activities. Some of these principles are discussed below.

CHAPTER 2. SPECIAL RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS

SECTION A. VETERANS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

- 1. EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED VETERANS, VIETNAM ERA VETERANS AND OTHER QUALIFIED VETERANS. Field facilities are to make on-going efforts to employ and advance disabled veterans and Vietnam era veterans. All facilities should use these key techniques:
 - a. Demonstrated support from each facility's top management.
- b. Productive recruitment outreach activities, including liaison with VA Counseling Psychologists and/or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, State employment service offices, State rehabilitation agencies, OPM service[s offices], veterans organization representatives, etc.
 - c. Effective use of available special appointing and training authorities.
- d. Full implementation of the field facility affirmative action program plans for employment of disabled veterans and other persons with disabilities.
- e. Assurance that these veterans have full access along with other employees to promotion, training, and advancement opportunities.
- f. Periodic evaluation of facility progress. A report which should provide some basis for these internal reviews is the quarterly statistical Disabled Veteran and Vietnam Era Veteran Employment Report (computer-generated COIN PAI 204 Report).

2. SPECIAL APPOINTING AND TRAINING AUTHORITIES

- a. **Authorities for Appointment and Training of Veterans.** There are a number of title 5 authorities specifically covering appointment and training of veterans and/or preference eligibles. These authorities cover: appointment under the amended Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA); Veterans [Recruitment] Appointments (VRAs); time-limited appointment of VRA eligibles; noncompetitive appointment of disabled veterans with a service-connected disability of 30 percent or more; unpaid training/work experience and possible subsequent noncompetitive appointment of service-disabled veterans (see subparagraph b []); and appointment of Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. Additional details on these authorities are located in part II, chapter 2 of this handbook.
- b. **Unpaid Training/Work Experience for Service-Disabled Veterans.** VA policy is to promote maximum use of authority granted by 38 U.S.C. chapter 31 to provide unpaid training for certain service-disabled veterans and by 5 CFR 3.1 and 315.604 to noncompetitively appoint such veterans to continuing positions and then convert them to career-conditional (or career). Facility heads will assess areas appropriate for chapter 31 training and advise the rehabilitation and employments staffs of servicing VA regional offices of these opportunities so that trainees may be referred.

- (1) **Utilization and Training.** There are two means through which Federal agencies may provide on-the-job training for disabled veterans under Chapter 31 authority—as paid employees via a regular appointment and as Chapter 31 unpaid trainees. Chapter 31 unpaid trainees will not replace or be used in lieu of regular employees for whom funds and ceiling have been provided. This training is to be provided on a host-enrollee basis for which an agreement, VA Form 22-1904, Agreement to Train Onthe-Job Disabled Veterans, is required. WOC (without compensation) appointments are inappropriate.
- (2) **Noncompetitive Appointments.** Special emphasis will be directed toward full utilization of the 5 CFR 315.604 noncompetitive appointment authority to enhance employment opportunities for disabled veterans who complete training. Every effort will be made to place Chapter 31 unpaid trainees who successfully complete training. This should include close coordination with Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) rehabilitation and education staffs, referral for employment consideration to other VA facilities, and referral to other Federal agencies if employment opportunities are not available within VA.
- c. **General.** Authorities specifically covering appointment and training of veterans are referred to above. Numerous other hiring or training authorities, while not specifically aimed at the veteran population, also often prove useful for those veterans who meet the applicable eligibility requirements. Examples include: the various authorities for appointing persons with disabilities (see 5 CFR, part 213 and part II, chapter 2, section C, this handbook); the time-limited appointment authorities (see 5 CFR, part 316), and part II, chapter 2, section B, this handbook); and such programs as Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP), traditionally known as Cooperative Education (see 5 CFR, part 213 and part II, chapter 2, section C, this handbook) and VA Alcohol and Drug Abuse Rehabilitation Counseling (see part II, chapter 2, section C, this handbook). See also 5 CFR, part 330, subpart D for information on positions restricted to preference eligibles (custodian; guard; messenger; and elevator operator). In addition, 38 U.S.C. 4214(g) authorizes the Secretary to accord preference for employment in VA of qualified Vietnam era veterans and certain disabled veterans as veterans benefits and psychological readjustment counselors, veterans claims examiners, outreach personnel, and veterans' representatives at educational institutions.

3. EMPLOYMENT OF VETERANS WITH MEDICAL MILITARY OCCUPATION SPECIALTIES

- a. **Statutory Basis.** Section 201 of the Veterans Health Care Expansion Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-82) amended section 7302 of title 38, United States Code, which now requires VA to "...carry out a major program for the recruitment, training, and employment of veterans with medical military occupation specialties as (A) physician assistants; (B) expanded-function dental auxiliaries; and (C) other medical technicians ... includ[ing] measures to advise all [such] qualified veterans ... and all members of the armed forces about to be discharged or released from active duty ... of employment opportunities with the Veterans Health Administration . .." The phrase "other medical technicians" includes all the positions associated with the direct health care of patients, as well as research and other medical related professional, technical, and assistant or aid type career fields.
- b. **Employment Information.** [Recruiting materials for specific occupations are sent to U.S. military discharge] centers as part of the initial distribution process, and are also available upon request.

c. Field Facility Actions

- (1) VA HRM offices and veterans assistance offices will use [VA recruitment information] with veterans having medical military occupation specialties. Veterans who request information as a result of computer generated letters (FL 20-680) will be provided the [] appropriate recruitment literature.
- (2) When outside recruitment is appropriate, the recruitment process will include notification of the vacancy, with a summary of the qualifications needed, to be furnished to the appropriate VA Vet Center and State Employment Service office. Positive efforts will be made to employ applicants referred by these offices.
- (3) VA HRM officers will review the monthly Specialty Discharge Listing furnished by the VA Automation Center, Austin, Texas. Those veterans identified as possible applicants for present and anticipated vacancies will be contacted promptly to explore their interests in VA employment.
- (4) Chiefs, HRM at VHA facilities will maintain liaison with appropriate offices of military installations to the extent feasible in meeting the objectives of the law.
- d. **Reports.** Periodic reports are generated through the PAID system to provide information to Central Office officials on VA progress in employing veterans with medical military occupation specialties. To identify such employees for reporting purposes through the PAID system, the Special Identifier Code "1" for Medical MOS must be entered on OLDE screens A120/A220, as indicated on page 6D-141 of MP-6, Part V, Supplement No. 1.5.